

# MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

This year's Master Gardener (MG) training class, which was held from January through mid-March, was composed of 85 residents from all areas of King County. The attendees received 54 hours of instruction on various horticulture topics. They were also given an additional six hours of information about WSU King County Extension and the best ways to serve the county's residents, for a total of 60 hours of instruction. Upon graduation, the trainees immediately began to work with veteran Master Gardeners in plant clinics, demonstration gardens, and Youth Education Programs, providing advice on environmentally friendly gardening practices.

In January, the Master Gardener Diagnostic Center returned to the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH) and moved into its new space. During the years between the time of the fire that destroyed Merrill Hall and this January, the diagnosticians were based in the King County Extension offices in Renton. Even working under these less-than-ideal conditions, Master Gardener diagnosticians examined over 1,500 specimens and made recommendations to county residents for the treatment of plant diseases. Now that the Master Gardener Diagnostic



Plant Sale and Education Fair Photo WSU KCE staff

Center at CUH has reopened, the diagnosticians are busier than ever and have added an extra day to their weekly schedule in the center.

This spring, Master Gardeners presented an Extension Education Event on growing vegetables that was given to a "sellout crowd."

Program Coordinator, Elaine Anderson, has begun receiving requests to speak at service club meetings. This promises to be an excellent way to educate the public about the mission of the Master Gardener program as well as the other services offered by WSU King County Extension.

## *New this year --*

Several interesting opportunities for collaboration presented themselves to the Master Gardener program this spring. Group Health asked Master Gardeners to partner with them to present a "Gardening for Good Health" workshop that was held in May at the Master Gardener Bellevue Demonstration Garden. Other partners in the event were the City of Bellevue, Whole Foods Market, Home Depot, and ParentMap Magazine. The event was a success, with approximately 150 participants coming from all areas of the county. 100% of the people who completed an event evaluation rated it either very good or excellent. Interestingly, although the event was publicized by all the partners, 41% of those completing the evaluation said they learned about it through the Master Gardener Program. We hope to build on our success and repeat "Gardening for Good Health" next year.

The Master Gardener program was also asked to provide expertise to a group from Romania that wanted to learn about rose growing in the United States. A MG expert on roses assisted the group by taking them on a tour of a rose specialty nursery and providing information on the cut flower business in the US as well as on rose hybridizers in Europe.

## Improving gardening & gardeners in King County

Education provided by the Master Gardener program has been shown to affect daily decisions made by gardeners.

- Studies show gardening to be the most popular hobby in the United States. Its impact on the environment is great.
- The Master Gardener program in King County provides information and demonstrations on ways, not only to lessen the harmful aspects of this impact, but to actually benefit the environment.
- 85% of residents surveyed in 2004 stated they made changes in pest management methods, pesticide use, plant selection, and watering practices based on information



Training at Bellevue Demonstration Garden

*Photo T. Murray*

The King County Master Gardener Youth Education Program includes 23 school gardens and a Teaching Kit Clinic that provides interactive programming to youth of all ages.

The speakers bureau continues to be a popular service to the community. Forty Master Gardeners volunteer to share their time and expertise on a variety of topics.

### Do you know someone interested in becoming a King County Master Gardener?

Master Gardener Volunteer Program applications are available and accepted only during August and September each year for classes that begin the following January. During these months you can download an application form from <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/Gardening/MasterGardener/HowToApply.htm> or request one by calling the Master Gardener office - 206-205-3122.

*For more information about the King County Master Gardener Program, please visit our Web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/> or call 206-205-3122.*

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